

Women's Athletics at the University of Kansas during the Progressive Era,
1890-1920

By

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The history of the American woman in sport is more than a century old. Within that time frame it has encompassed activities ranging from simple recreational pastimes to high level international competition. The original few sports deemed appropriate for women's participation have expanded to an enormous variety of activities. In fact, there is hardly a single contemporary sport which remains outside the ken of female involvement. What was primarily a spontaneous, self-directed endeavor has now become a well-organized program replete with sponsors and promoters from educational institutions to cigarette companies. When sport for both men and women began to emerge as a viable cultural activity, only a handful of women gently played. At this time in history, literally millions of American women engage in organized sport, some of which is strenuous, adventurous, and highly competitive.¹

The Progressive Era was characterized by the general disapproval of most types of athletic competition for women. Victorian ideals governed the social conduct of women in the nineteenth century. Women were expected to maintain a delicate image. Accepted patterns of behavior for women reflected frailty, ill health, and weakness.² Sparhawk points out that "Before 1887, the participation of women in sports was restricted to noncompetitive recreational activities, including bowling, croquet, golf and horseback riding. A few women participated in "female pedestrianism" (long distance walking) or endurance swimming."³ Sparhawk contends that "during this period, the objective of sport participation for women was not the development of physical vigor, but the encouragement of respectable social encounters. Much sport activity was restricted to the members of the upper classes."⁴

She continues, noting “the real breakthrough for American women in sport, however, occurred at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876. It was there that the bicycle was introduced to the American people. Suddenly, women literally had a vehicle for participation in physical activity. Shortly thereafter, Amelia Bloomer designed nonrestrictive clothing (“bloomers”) for women bicyclists. More and more women wore these bloomers while performing a variety of athletic activities, and a new era of women’s participation in sport was underway.”⁵

Smith admits that “Not everyone was thrilled with the new athletic model for women. Doctors claimed that girls were impairing their childbearing abilities; social scientists and journalists wondered if competition damaged the female psyche; moralists decried the public display of women in inappropriate clothing and actions.”⁶ Opponents of physical education for women argued that “all instructors are not wise and that most girls are overzealous.” “Few women can work or play moderately, and if they once become absorbed in athletics, they will be prone, in their excitement, to go beyond their strength and do themselves lasting harm.”⁷

However, in the 1890s, “physical education for women began to gain favor among American educators, especially at places like the newly formed seven sisters colleges of the Northeast. Their administrators saw exercise as a means for the growing female upper-class student population to counter the stresses of higher education, as well as create an alternative to the Victorian woman.”⁸ Miss Harriet I. Ballintine, a faculty member at Vassar College, wrote in 1901, “If women are to enter into athletics it should be for the purpose of recreation and maintaining health. The making of

records, while of some interest to the competitor, should be only secondary in importance.”⁹

Gerber writes “Activities were almost always of the individual sport type. Only when the colleges began to develop programs of physical activity for women did the team sports develop.”¹⁰ She notes that this did not happen until “close to the end of the century.” And continues, “Prior to that time sports in colleges were similar to those in the larger social environment. The colleges were also responsible for influencing a change from coeducational sport to separate sport for men and women. Probably this was due—at least in part—to the advent of physical education programs, which required dress and activities that the women teachers thought were best performed in female seclusion.”¹¹

Women’s collegiate athletics is an outgrowth of women’s physical education departments in the United States. From its beginnings, women’s physical education has undergone changes not only in the structure of its programs, but also in its very mission. The original mission of physical education departments involved health, hygiene, and corrective exercises. Society considered the function of physical education for women solely to correct posture problems and communicate necessary health and hygiene issues. While physical education programs in colleges progressed slowly, educational opportunities for women exploded. In part, the expansion of educational opportunities contributed not only to the rise of the women’s movement, but also the growing requests for access to athletic competition.¹²

Gerber's chapter on Collegiate Sport in *American Woman in Sport* notes that "Collegiate sport for women developed in a relatively unified, controlled pattern across the country, governed as it was by women physical educators with no external interference." She asserts that "There were three aspects of it: curricular, intramural, and extramural, which in the thinking of physical educators were built on one another." Using a diagram, she describes this relationship in the form of a triangle. "At its base, and most important part, is the curricular program. It was assumed that programming each stage did not take place until the previous one was well established and adequately led and funded. Students were not permitted to ascend to varsity level competition without passing through intramural competition in that sport—a pattern that has changed."¹³

Chris Hartman's research on women's athletics at the University of Wisconsin yielded this conclusion, "the fact that women's intercollegiate sports took so long to develop is no indication of a lack of interest on the part of students. Rather, it is the result of pressure from faculty and administration who feared the effects of competition and who were anxious to establish a respectable role for women in collegiate athletics."¹⁴ He continues, "though it is now considered a natural component of the college experience, women's intercollegiate competition has been the subject of intense and prolonged debate; in fact, those who should have been advocating for female athletes were often the ones fiercely battling against the "evils" of inter-institutional play."¹⁵ "This attitude was surely benevolent, but it had the unfortunate effects of

delaying the development of women's sports on the college level and severely limiting women's opportunities for decades.”¹⁶

The University of Kansas

Clifford Griffin writes, “While the basic outline of the educational history of women at the University is known,” their athletic history is a bit more difficult to trace.

¹⁷ Very few records have been kept that reveal the true beginning of female participation in sports. Mable Lee includes the University of Kansas with several other institutions where physical education programs (called Physical Culture at the time) were set up for women (1893) before men (1894).¹⁸ Further research shows that in 1884, ten years earlier, the women of the University were already benefiting from exercise and participation in the form of the Ladies Senior Boating Club.¹⁹ Just two years later, the university yearbook featured a women’s tennis team.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to trace the origin and the development of women’s intercollegiate athletics at the University of Kansas during the Progressive Era; to identify and record the significant events and achievements that comprised the historic growth of the women’s sports program during the selected period; and to identify the leaders who contributed significantly to the women’s sports program.²⁰

Significance

Many documents pertaining to the history of women's athletics at the University of Kansas have been discarded or lost in the shuffle as coaches and administrators have changed. Much of the information necessary to reconstruct the events and feelings of a period is stored in the memories of former participants and directors of sports programs. Unfortunately, as time has passed so have many of the women responsible for the development of the program.²¹ Research on this topic has not been done at the University of Kansas. It is important to trace the history of the women's athletic program and record it so that it may be preserved for future generations.

Design of the Study

Sparhawk, Leslie, Turbow and Rose (1989) point out that, "the modern history of American women's participation in athletic competition can be divided into four periods: the Pre-Organizational Era (1887–1916), the Organizational Years (1917–1956), the Competitive Period (1957–1971), and the Title IX era (1972–1987)."²² The focus of this paper will be the Pre-Organizational Era which coincides with the Progressive Era. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the study. Chapter 2 will describe higher education and educational opportunities for women during this time period. Chapter 3 will introduce leisure, sports and college athletics for women. Chapter 4 will in detail give the history of women's athletic participation at the University of Kansas from 1890–1920. Finally, Chapter 5 will serve as a conclusion.

Sources for the Study

The majority of the information used for this paper will come from primary sources. This will include KU Catalogs, The Jayhawker Yearbooks, *KU Graduate Magazine*, University Archives Artificial Records for Women's Athletics, University Archives Scrapbooks, *Daily Kansan*, *Lawrence Journal World*, *Wichita Eagle*, *Topeka Capital*, and special collections.

Due to the time period studied, it was not possible to interview anyone with ties to the Women's Athletic Association. Much of the information specific to the University of Kansas was found in the University Daily Kansan. Virtually all of the articles were written by staff of the paper with no author listed. One would hope that all of the information was accurate and unbiased.

Notes: Chapter One, Introduction

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3. Ibid., xvi.
4. Ibid., xiv.
5. Ibid., xv.
6. Lissa Smith, ed., *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 5.
7. Lucille Hill, "Introduction to Athletics and Outdoor Sports for Women," in *Chronicle of American Physical Education: Selected Readings 1855–1930*, ed. Aileene Lockhart (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1972), 228.
8. Smith, 4.
9. Harriet Ballintine, "The Value of Athletics to College Girls," in *Chronicle of American Physical Education: Selected Readings 1855–1930*, ed. Aileene Lockhart (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1972) 198.
10. Gerber, et al., *American Woman in Sport*, 4.
11. Ibid, 6.
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19. *The Cicala*, (Lawrence, KS: Journal Water-Power Printing House, 1884) 77.
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Chapter 2

Education and Educational Opportunities for Women

Female Seminaries

Both before and after the Civil War education beyond elementary school for women was very limited, except where Emma Willard, Catharine Beecher, Mary Lyon, and a few other dedicated women had made their mark. The precursor of the women's college was the female seminary, which grew rapidly in numbers at the end of the 1700s and the beginning of the 1800s.

Despite the increasing support for women's seminary education, there were those who grew dissatisfied with the level of education provided. Emma Willard was one who wanted to "reform the seminary thoroughly" to provide more academic training. Beecher, on the other hand, wanted to "create a new institution for women" that was similar to men's college education. Thomas Woody explained, however, that there needed to be two types of transformations in the education available to women before the ideal of "genuine women's colleges could be realized." First, there needed to be substantial improvements in the level of education available in the seminaries and, later, high schools so women would be capable of participating in higher level subjects. Second, proponents of such an education needed to be able to solicit financial support for the funding of colleges for women. Both of these changes took time, Woody identifies the period of 1825 to 1875 as a "period of experimentation...during which the

college idea was advocated by several able leaders and experimental attempts at its realization were made, with varying rigor and success.”¹

Peril writes, “When Emma Willard’s 1819 *Plan for Improving Female Education* (which among other things called for state support of a school for girls) was rejected by the New York legislature, influential citizens of the city of Troy promised their financial support if Willard established a school there. The Troy Female Seminary opened in 1821. Calling her school a “seminary” indicated Willard’s seriousness of purpose; male seminaries prepared their students for professional futures, just as the new female seminaries prepared students for teaching and educated motherhood.”² Willard’s curriculum led to the success of the school including “mathematics and science as well as religion, and the “peculiar duties” of women.” The Troy Female Seminary “remains a highly regarded girls’ prep school today.”³

In 1823, Catherine Beecher opened the Hartford Female Seminary and offered students what Beecher deemed “the most necessary parts of education.”⁴ Peril notes that, “In addition to the domestic training that she advocated, this meant a rigorous curriculum of English, rhetoric, logic, philosophy (natural and moral), chemistry, history, Latin, and algebra. Beecher was also an early booster of physical exercise for girls.”⁵ Beecher went on to establish the Board of National Popular Education in 1846 and later founded the American Women’s Educational Association.⁶

Mary Lyon set out to create an educational experience that most closely resembled a true college education. Mount Holyoke Seminary opened in 1837 emphasizing academics. The first female institution with entrance requirements, Mount

Holyoke welcomed 116 women the first year and turned away over 400 the next. In 1888, a fourth year of study including languages and higher mathematics was added and Mount Holyoke became a college.⁷

Women's Colleges and Coeducation

The first college for women, the Georgia Female College in Macon, Georgia, was chartered in 1836. In 1840, the college's initial president, George F. Pierce, noted that "Universities are endowed for the education of sons, while daughters are overlooked or forgotten."⁸ While called a "college," the Georgia female College "regularly admitted twelve year olds" and "resembled a superior academy more than a male college." Many argue that Mary Sharp College founded in Winchester, Tennessee, in 1853, was the first "true women's college." Others will insist that Elmira Female College in New York is the first women's college opening its doors in 1855.⁹

As more opportunities for women opened up throughout the east, Oberlin was forging ahead. A coeducational school with an interracial student body, Oberlin graduated its first female B.A. in 1841. Within the next couple of years, women's colleges were chartered in Tennessee, New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Woody states that "by 1855 the idea of college education for young women, in an institution like those established for men, had been promoted in Southern, Western, and Northern sections of the United States; and that efforts had been made in all to create institutions able to give such an education."¹⁰ However, it was not until the opening of Smith College and Wellesley College, when "we have opportunity to see a women's college

beginning at the very outset of her career to provide a course of study almost identical with that of the best men's colleges.”¹¹

Some may question Woody's point about Smith and Wellesley and wonder how he could have possibly left Vassar out. Vassar College was chartered in 1861 and finally opened its doors to over three hundred students in September of 1865. Matthew Vassar, a successful brewer, had never been interested in women's education but was approached by Milo P. Jewett, a Presbyterian minister and proponent of female education, to support a first-rate endowed college for women. Newspapers in Boston and New York followed the story of the beer maker who gave half his savings and 200 acres of land to a women's college. As opposed to the other colleges of the time, Vassar had two things that Elmira and other colleges did not, “big money and vast publicity.”¹²

In 1855, Iowa became the first public university in the United States to admit men and women on an equal basis. Even as educational opportunities for females increased, coeducation continued to be less acceptable in the Northeast and in Southern regions of the United States. The numerous land grant colleges and then universities established by the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and 1890 admitted women as well as men. Turk points out that, “by neither explicitly demanding nor prohibiting coeducation at the new schools, the act unintentionally invited debate over coeducation and opened up a forum in which could be heard the demands of tax-paying state residents who wanted their daughters educated.”¹³

The promise of fuller classrooms and increased tuition dollars proved appealing to many colleges of the late nineteenth century and the number of schools allowing

women to enroll increased dramatically. Although more women were attending college, they weren't always welcome on campus. Gordon notes that, "Women had difficulty finding housing, and most universities did not extend to them medical, recreational, or physical education facilities."¹⁴

According to Turk, by 1890, 40,000 women attended institutions of higher education, 70.1 percent of them at coeducational schools.¹⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, universities around the country created coordinate colleges to deal with the dual problem of a rising demand for women's education and the rising concern about educating them alongside men.¹⁶ By 1920, 283,000 women were attending college with 81.3 percent at coeducational schools. Women were then nearly 49% of the collegiate population.¹⁷

Educating Women

While the country saw its first women pursuing higher education in the middle to late nineteenth century, both in women's colleges and coeducational institutions, there was no national agreement about what constituted a proper education for women. Questions arose as to the proper nature of their studies. "What kind of education, especially of a comparatively advanced kind, was deemed suitable for girls was a matter of opinion rather than one of general consensus."¹⁸

There was also a concern that "college education would destroy womanly nature" and that women who participated would "endanger their health." Another criticism was based on the idea that "women...simply could not do college work; they

did not have minds like those of men. These sex differences in mind were said to be an insuperable barrier, against which no propaganda for the equality of women could be effective.”¹⁹ Opponents of coeducation were sure that “feminine problems” would prevent the women from attending classes regularly and that consequently they should not be admitted to men’s colleges because they would hinder the class work.

In 1874, Dr. Edward C. Clarke’s *Sex in Education: Or a Fair Chance for Girls* was published. Clarke advanced the theory that overuse by one part of the body would drain the energy from the other parts. In effect if a woman attempted the difficult work of college courses, her blood supply would be drawn to nourish her brain. As a result, her uterus would atrophy and she would become sterile.²⁰ Squires admits, “This theory was given credence by the medical profession and was used to discourage young women, or their parents, who were considering high education.”²¹

In fact, opposition to women receiving a college education continued through the nineteenth century. According to historian Thomas Woody, “It was feared that, as one asserted, women might forsake their infants for quadratic equations.”²²

Woody notes that

It is strange, considering the immediate and very evident success of women in doing college work, that this belief in their mental inferiority and physical weakness continued as long as it did. Its persistence in the face of facts was one of the best proofs of the social prejudice that opposed women’s collegiate education.²³

The reasons for providing higher education for women remained long undefined, even by advocates of women’s higher education. Many feared the social consequences of providing higher education for women. Therefore, advocates relied on

traditional justifications, such as enabling women to be better wives, mothers and teachers, which was the 19th century ideal of true womanhood. Some also argued that higher education would help prepare women for “their future task: the upbringing of their sons.”²⁴ Little thought was given to the idea that women would be helped by higher education to “reach their potential as full individuals, regardless of their sex.”²⁵

Allison writes, “Cultural factors and government policy pushed the need for educating women. The same post Civil War push for better public education for women and men created yet another reason for educating women: the increased need for teachers.”²⁶ She continues, “With many seeing the education of small children as an extension of the home, societal restraints placed on women entering in to the public sphere lessened as the need for teachers increased.”²⁷

Women were naturally qualified to teach at the elementary level because of such qualities as their morality, maternal instincts and emotional nature, according to educational reformers.²⁸ As public education systems became more formalized late in the 19th century, however, it was seen that these natural aptitudes had to be supplemented by formal higher education.²⁹

The number of colleges for women increased throughout the end of the 1800s. There was also a growing trend towards providing women with an education to prepare them for specific professions such as teaching. According to Woody, the result was that

Women were prepared to be teachers of seminaries and high schools in large numbers; they were, undoubtedly, personally benefited by more extended culture; socially and politically, they were better able to stand independently and with new self-assurance; and financially, a college education came to have a more definite value, though at first college girls had some difficulty in turning it to use.³⁰

Women in College

According to Barbara Solomon, “Women who attended college between 1860 and 1920 fell into three distinct generations based on the issues and experiences they faced as undergraduates, defining themselves as members of that generation.”³¹ She writes, “The first generation of women attended college between 1860 and 1880. These women were aware of their status as pioneers in education but continued defining themselves in the nineteenth-century term “true women.” The second generation appeared during the 1890s and 1900s. These women still recognized their roles as pioneers, yet called themselves “new women.” The third generation, appearing between the 1910s and 1920s, was a more sophisticated version of the “new woman,” serving as a precursor of the flapper of the 1920s.”³²

The turn of the twentieth century marked an increase in the total number of women attending institutions of higher education and in the variety of economic backgrounds from which they came. In *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, Lynn Gordon points out that 11,000 women were enrolled in higher education in 1870; this represented 0.7% of women aged 18 to 21 and 21% of all college students. By 1910, 140,000 women were enrolled in higher education courses; this represented 3.8% of women aged 18 to 21 and 39.6% of all college students.³³ Of the total number of women enrolled in higher education in 1880, 15,700 were enrolled in women’s colleges; by 1910 this number had increased to 34,100.³⁴ Even then,

comparatively few women were college students, though, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, women formed a significant portion of all students. Also, the increase in women students enrolled in higher education from 1870 to 1900 “was more rapid than that for males.”³⁵

In addition, the demographics of the women attending college changed. Specifically, “the age range of students narrowed as college attendance became more common. With the first generation, the age range included young students from preparatory departments to older women who worked in order to save enough money to return to college. In contrast, the second and third generations had a more narrow age range, with the majority of students being between 18 and 21 years old.”³⁶

Physical Culture to Physical Education

Reet Howell points out that, “Exercise in the form of calisthenics and gymnastics was an integral part of the curriculum at Mount Holyoke. Domestic work, calisthenics, outdoor exercises and hygiene were all parts of the program from the 1830s through the 1860s. This curriculum, which included exercise instruction for the ladies, was the exception, rather than the rule, for the period preceding the Civil War.”³⁷

According to Swanson, the *Prospectus for Vassar Female College* made Matthew Vassar’s thinking “clear.” Outlined in the college’s “General Scheme of Education,” Physical Education came first, “as *fundamental* to all the rest,” for “Good health is essential to the successful prosecution of study, and to the vigorous

development of either the mental or moral powers.” In order for the school to adhere to his plan, Vassar provided a School of Physical Training for which he built the “Calisthenium”. Within the Calisthenium he provided faculty to instruct “sport and physical training.”³⁸

About the same time in the Middle West, when women were first admitted to the University of Wisconsin in 1873, the University fitted up a gymnasium in the Ladies Hall. Similarly, in Boston the women of the “Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women,” later called Radcliffe College, requested Sargent at Harvard to provide gymnastic work for them. He did so and opened the Sanatory Gymnasium for them in 1881.³⁹

With such theories abroad, colleges stressed a healthful lifestyle and “physical culture” for their students. In describing the physical education of the day, Ainsworth noted that:

There have been three concepts of physical education in colleges for women. First it was introduced to cure the physical defects resulting from study. When the feminine constitution proved to be equal to the strain of education, physical education was continued as a preventative measure. The third stage was the recognition of the social as well as physical values to be gained through physical education.⁴⁰

Summary

During this period physical education for both men and women ordinarily consisted of exercise classes to maintain or improve the students’ health. Sport programs for men and women differed greatly. Intercollegiate athletics for men began as a series of challenges or contests completely under the jurisdiction of students.

Women's sports programs consisted of informal recreational sport or sport activities included as part of a physical education class.

Notes: Chapter Two, Education and Educational Opportunities for Women

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3. Ibid, 22.

4. Barbara M. Cross, ed., *The Educated Woman in America: Selected Writings of Catharine Beecher, Margaret Fuller and M. Carey Thomas*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965) 6.

5. Peril, 24.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 26.

8. Woody, 140.

9. Peril, 36.

10. Woody, 147.

11. Ibid., 182.

12. Peril, 36.

13. Diana B. Turk, *Bound by a Mighty Vow: Sisterhood and Women's Fraternities, 1870-1920*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2004) 14.

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16. Amy Thompson McCandless, *The Past in the Present: Women's Higher Education in the Twentieth Century American South*. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), 84.

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18. Gunilla Lindgren, *Higher Education for Girls in North American College Fiction 1886-1912*. (Lund University Press, 2005) 49.

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21. Mary Lou Squires, "Competitive Sport and the 'Cult of Thru Womanhood': A Paradox at the Turn of the Century" (D diss., Texas Woman's University, 1977). 103

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31. Merton E. Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1928. Reprint, Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1951), 204.

32. Ibid., 97.

33. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College," 2.

34. Ibid., 7.

35. Barbara Solomon Miller, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 58.

36. Gordon, "The Gibson Girl Goes to College," 140.

37. Reet Howell, "Generalizations on Women in Sport, Games and Play in the United States from Settlement to 1860," in *Her Story in Sport: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports* (West Point, New York: Leisure Press, 1982) 74.

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Chapter 3

Sports and College Athletics

Intramurals, Extramurals, Play Days and Field Days

Introduction

Women's intercollegiate athletics is an outgrowth of women's physical education departments in the United States. From its beginnings, women's physical education has undergone changes not only in the structure of its programs, but also in its very mission. Athletics for women went through three fairly distinct phases during the Progressive Era. The original mission of physical education departments involved health, hygiene, and corrective exercises. Society considered the function of physical education for women solely to correct posture problems and communicate necessary health and hygiene issues. This gave way to instruction and "gymnastics." With instruction came the desire for play and competition. College sports for women during this time period eventually evolved into Intramurals, Extramurals, Play Days and Field Days. Soon after, intercollegiate games were played...and the rest is history.

Sports for Women in the 19th Century

Sport in the nineteenth century was fairly limited. With the exception of a few women who played baseball, rowed, and participated in track and field, the primary sports of the time included croquet, archery, bowling, tennis and golf. Strenuous activities were not developed for women, or for most men. "The clothing of the time period did not allow for much movement and those who engaged in sport were

typically gentlemen and gentlewomen who had no taste for hard effort.”¹ Ellen Gerber continues,

The primary purpose of sport or early physical recreation seemed to be the opportunity for a respectable social encounter. In an age of Puritanical sexual morality, it gave men and women something to do together. Therefore physical activities, including competitive sports, were most often conducted in a coeducational setting. Since the skill level and effort was not high for either sex, it was feasible for men and women to compete with one another individually or in couples.²

Most sporting activities of the time occurred outside. It was only the well to do who had the leisure time and the money to belong to clubs who enjoyed indoor facilities. This greatly limited participation and the “development of new ideas.” Gerber continues, “Municipal and federal governments had not yet developed facilities for the common people, though croquet and bicycling were two physical activities in which the masses could and did participate.”³ Cahn points out that physical training for women had for decades emphasized health and fitness. A primary reason for this focus was for the benefit of future mothers. In the early part of the nineteenth century, concerns over the frail nature of upper and upper-middle class females and concern over the declining birth rate among highly educated females was a major topic of discussion. Fears that women would fail to reproduce their part of society, or at least do it in a healthy manner, were voiced quite actively.⁴

Prior to the Civil War, the general perception of society had separated the masculine and feminine attributes of physical activity into the categories of “manly sport” and “female exercise.” Regardless, by the late 1800s, women had competed in

both baseball and basketball. Cahn mentions that these sports in particular had been viewed as working class and unladylike pastimes by much of the female leadership of women's physical activities. The objections came because of provocative uniforms, media depictions of the athletes, the abundance of male spectators, and fears of illicit sexual behavior.⁵

Physical Training

Because of the emphasis on physical fitness for women, administrators at almost every newly forming women's college in the late nineteenth century created "a formal physical training program that encouraged, or ordered, students to exercise." Though fitness and hygiene were the focus of these early programs, students often participated in sports.

Andrea Radke's work "Can she not see and hear, smell and taste?" describes the lives of women at coeducation land-grant universities during this time period. When describing physical activity she notes that "Swedish drills dominated physical culture classes for women until around 1900, and these exercises were commonly used at most schools."⁶ These drills required the use of "dumbbells, Indian clubs, wands and other lifting and motion drills with arms, legs and torsos to encourage action and mobility." Beginning around the turn of the century, "Women students moved into other acceptable forms of sport, like fencing, archery, and tennis, as long as those sports promoted feminine refinement, grace and delicacy."⁷

Female leaders and physical educators favored the upper-class sports as these sports were socially acceptable. “Upper-class” sports usually involved less contact and were generally less strenuous. In addition to acceptability, the more feminine individual sports, such as golf and tennis, were seen as having greater “carry-over value”. The lessons learned in these activities were thought to prepare young ladies of stature for life after college.⁸

Mabel Lee notes, “From their beginnings, the women’s academies and colleges favored participation of their students in sports and games as well as in gymnastics and dancing.” By the 1870s college women were participating in various activities including skating, riding sidesaddle, forming walking clubs, and playing tennis. Lee continues, “By the 1880s Wellesley College had its crews and rowing on its campus lake, and Goucher and Vassar colleges had swimming pools of sorts.”⁹

Gerber points out that “activities for college women were almost always of the individual sport type. Only when the schools began to develop programs of physical activity for women did team sports develop. However, that phenomenon did not occur until close to the end of the century. Prior to that time sports in colleges were similar to those in the larger social environment. The colleges were also responsible for influencing a change from coeducational sport to separate sport for men and women. Probably this was due—at least in part—to the advent of physical education programs, which required dress and activities that the women teachers thought were best performed in female seclusion.”¹⁰

Intramurals

According to Swanson, “competitive sports for women were organized in a variety of ways depending on the institution, the leadership, the facilities, and the desires of the students. There were clubs, all-college tournaments, interclass tournaments, interclass competitions, varsity programs, field days, pageants and festivals, and athletic associations.”¹¹

In *Her Story in Sport: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports*, Karen Kenney writes

Intramurals were developed to meet the needs of college women through clubs, interclass competitions, and social matches. This was the first form of organized sport contests in the colleges for both men and women.¹² As early as the 1870s seven or eight baseball clubs were in existence at Vassar College.¹³ Other examples include the Young Ladies Football Club (1877), and the Young Ladies Tennis Club (1891) at the University of California, Berkeley, a golf club at Smith College in 1898¹⁴ and the ‘90 Hare and Hound Club (1890)¹⁵ at Wellesley College.¹⁶

Annual field days became popular and were held as interclass matches. Kenney continues, citing S.F. Richardson’s work “Physical Exercises for Women” from 1859 that “extramural forms of competitions were introduced as an effort to stimulate a general interest in sports.”¹⁷ Two factors limited intercollegiate competition in the late 1800’s. Some argued that the stress of the contests would be too much. Others contended that “the tendency would be to narrow, rather than increase, the number of players participating by raising the standard of play and thus discouraging the less expert players.” It was thought that a good alternative to intercollegiate sports was

interclass competitions. This gave all students the opportunity to play at varying levels of expertise.¹⁸

Castelow's research reveals that "Field Days were eventually replaced by "Play Days." These were created as a partial substitute for women's athletics. Athletes from several colleges came together with no previously organized practices, and students were mixed so that no institution would be represented by a particular team."¹⁹ Play days met the needs for fitness while deemphasizing detrimental competitive practices. The emphasis on Play Days was on participation and exercise, not on winning.²⁰ The periodical *Mind and Body*, in its November, 1895 issue, reported Vassar as offering the first women's field day held in any college in the United States.

Kenney contends that "Participation in college athletics presented women with an acceptable way to compete in sports. Intramural competitions were sanctioned by most institutions; however, the advent of intercollegiate contests were not commonplace because physical educators feared the effects of competition." Although, she writes, "by 1901, the evaluation of the college woman's indulgence in sports had become more favorable."²¹

Another finding by Castelow revealed that "Telegraphic meets were also held and were competitive in nature." Blanche Trilling, head of the APEA's Women's Athletic Committee, identified these meets as "an emotional outlet for those with intercollegiate aspirations."²² Telegraphic meets afforded women the opportunity to compete without having to travel to the opposing school. Results of the "competition" were then sent via telegraph to the opponent and the results were tallied.

Organization of Athletics

Usher writes that “Student interest in sports and games had long been recognized as a very important part of college life.” Clearly, “this had not always been apparent for both sexes.” She continues, “In the early days of campus sports, male students initiated their own activities with little or no supervision, nor with any institutional administrative control. At this point, American athletics were fundamentally of the intramural type. Soon thereafter various clubs and groups sought off-campus competition.” Citing Means, she reveals that “It was not long, though, before institutional control was recognized as desirable.”²³ Competitive sport activities for women had less rapidly assumed a significant role in the institutional environment.

Swanson and Spears note that “competitive sports for women in this period (1885-1917) differed from men in several significant ways.”²⁴

- 1) First, from the beginning, women’s programs were organized and conducted largely in Departments of Physical Education for Women in coeducational institutions or in Departments of Physical Education in women’s colleges.
- 2) Second, the philosophy on which the programs were planned carefully avoided the problems created by the men’s programs. Women were not permitted to engage in games where injuries were numerous. Also, they excluded the public from watching their contests so that they could not be accused of fostering some of the “evils” of men’s athletics.
- 3) Third, the philosophy on which women’s programs were based encouraged the participation of many students rather than a few for a varsity team.²⁵

“In spite of the philosophy, “A sport for every girl and every girl in a sport,” the women’s programs continued to be criticized as too strenuous, possibly damaging to the women, and encouraging unladylike behavior.”²⁶

Advocates of women’s participation in athletics felt that “the demands of discipline, obedience, emotional control and unselfishness required for successful participation in athletics developed a girl’s character as she developed her muscles.”²⁷ Team sports like field hockey and individual sports, such as golf, tennis, swimming, and archery, were popular and approved of. However, many team sports for females were frowned upon because of aggressive play and the lower class of the participants.²⁸

By carefully controlling the type of activity, by supervising all matches, and by planning types of activities which differed from the men’s, female physical educators were able to provide opportunities for many women to pursue sports in acceptable surroundings and to enjoy the new games of the period. It is also true that the “acceptable surroundings” often lacked adequate space and facilities, and the new games were frequently played with makeshift equipment, as women struggled for minimal programs.²⁹

In spite of opportunities for a truly coeducational extra-curriculum during the Progressive Era, men’s and women’s student lives proceeded along separate, although parallel, paths. Aided by newly hired female faculty and administrators, coeducated women students in the 1890s set up their own campus communities with organizations and activities similar to men’s. At the women’s colleges, the 1890s marked the beginning of the new era, as faculty and students demanded an end to “seminary-like”

regulations from the 1870s and 1880s, and established extracurricular activities similar to those at men's colleges.³⁰

Student associations, usually called Women's Athletic Associations, also developed during this period. Although these were "student" organizations, most of them were carefully advised and directed by a woman faculty member. In 1891, the first WAA was instituted at Bryn Mawr.³¹ These associations were run by students and faculty members who sponsored interclass competitions. Besides holding competitive games, the athletic associations secured facilities.³² Much like their male counterparts, Women's Athletic Associations awarded letter jackets or letter sweaters to the best athletes overall or in particular competitions.³³

Women at Vassar College played baseball as early as 1866, at Smith College by 1880, and at Mount Holyoke in 1891.³⁴ By the 1890s the girls at Mt. Holyoke had an ice-skating rink; at Wells, a golf course; at Bryn Mawr, a riding stable; at Vassar, an athletic field; and everywhere everyone was bicycling. With the exception of baseball, team sports were beyond the experience of girls and women until 1892, when Smith College offered basketball for women. Also, the closing years of the century brought track and field sports to schoolgirls, no doubt inspired by the revival of the Olympics.³⁵

Basketball

Basketball was one of the earliest prominent competitive team sports in which females participated. Senda Berenson first introduced game to her students at Smith College after reading James Naismith's description of Basket Ball. Horger points out

that, “Basketball spread quickly among female students, and coaches and physical directors frequently changed the rules to accommodate their “particular needs”. By the turn of the century, thousands of women played basketball, and remarkably few of them played exactly the same game.”³⁶ He mentions that “Smith played the so-called “line game,” with six-woman teams, both inside and outside, Bryn Mawr played by the men’s rules, outside, on a boundary-less field with seven-woman teams and Oberlin played outside with seven-woman teams, without lines but with a no-snatching rule.”³⁷

In the early years of women’s basketball, many thought the sport would produce several positive effects for women and their changing role in society. It was thought by some that women lacked organizational and team skills that basketball training could provide because their positions in the social order had not called for these skills in the past.³⁸ Berenson notes in *The Significance of Basket Ball for Women* that other possible benefits of the game included “physical and moral courage, self-reliance and self-control, and the ability to meet success and defeat with dignity.”³⁹

Not long after the game of basketball was created, a number of women’s colleges on the East Coast that were near to each other began playing interschool contests, but Miss Berenson, the originator of the women’s game, held out against such contests. Quoting from her biography⁴⁰:

Soon there came challenges...from all over the East and West, and at this point Miss Berenson again proved herself a leader. With a long look ahead she foresaw that intercollegiate athletics might well become a menace to real physical education for women, she answered each letter politely, but firmly explained her reason for refusing all offers. By this stand, steadfastly adhered to, she dissipated the fear which had been at the bottom of much faculty hostility to her department.⁴¹

The popularity of basketball and other sports resulted in some degree of intercollegiate competition. Some colleges offered intercollegiate sports while others limited participation to interclass contests. Money from gate receipts was practically nonexistent, and in some instances audiences were admitted by invitation.⁴²

The first known intercollegiate contest occurred on the West Coast. The date was April 4, 1896. The women of Stanford played Berkeley, 9-on-9, ending in a 2-1 Stanford victory.⁴³ Mabel Lee writes, “As to the situation in the Middle West, little is known, which probably means that little intercollegiate playing was going on before the turn of the century. Since there were few colleges in the farther reaches of the country that supported departments of physical education before the close of the nineteenth century, it is quite probable that there is little along this line for research workers to discover.”⁴⁴ Lee continues “Of the little that is known of the Middle West contests, the earliest record is of a match game played at the University of Nebraska between the University girl’s basketball team and a town team from Council Bluffs, Iowa, played March 4, 1898. In 1898, women students in five Kansas colleges were playing intercollegiate basketball with each other—University of Kansas, Baker and Ottawa universities, Emporia Normal School, and Washburn College.”⁴⁵

Summary

Athletics and competition for women continued to be controversial through the turn of the century. In 1904, The Midwest Conference of Deans of Women registered its disapproval of women’s intercollegiate athletic competition in the United States.

Many institutions discouraged intercollegiate and interscholastic contests, practice time was reduced and travel was virtually eliminated.

Despite this ban on women's competition, female physical educators and college women continued to break new ground. Concerns about women's health led to the formation of two organizations in 1917, to direct the growing number of athletic programs:

- Athletic Conference of American College Women, organized by Blanche Trilling of the University of Wisconsin. "The efforts of the Federation are devoted to those activities which might be sponsored by the Women's Athletic Association, and which open to the student opportunity for useful recreation pursuits and the development of outdoor hobbies."⁴⁶
- Committee on Women's Athletics (CWA), which was part of the American Physical Education Association.⁴⁷

By this time, women were influenced by a growing number of advocates for physical activity and sport as a means of improving health and attractiveness. Some women exercised to improve their beauty, health, and fitness, while others used it as a means of therapy prescribed to overcome an illness. Still others were interested in team sports and competition.

What appeared as major strides during this time period came to a screeching halt when, at the 1920 meeting of the Conference of College Directors of Physical

Education, “the group went on record as disapproving of women’s intercollegiate athletics for the following reasons:

1. It leads to professionalism.
2. Training of a few to the sacrifice of many.
3. It is unsocial.
4. Necessity of professional coaches.
5. Physical educators, both men and women, of our leading colleges find results undesirable.
6. Expense.
7. Unnecessary nerve fatigue.”⁴⁸

Two years later female physical educators took more direct action to control competition for women through the Committee on Women’s Athletics of the American Physical Education Association, which now included committees on basketball, field hockey, track and field, and swimming.

Incredible strides were made by women during the Progressive Era. Sports were no exception. For the next 30 or 40 years, varying degrees of competition took place at institutions of higher education across the country. Finally, in the 1960s, women were again enthralled with sport clubs and competing on a regular basis. It would be another decade, though, before legislation would be passed that allowed for equal participation by women in intercollegiate athletics.

Notes: Chapter Three, Sports and College Athletic

1. Gerber, et al., 4.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Susan K. Cahn, *Coming on Strong: Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Women's Sport* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 28-29.
5. Ibid., 9, 14, 25, 83-84.
6. Andrea Gayle Radke, "Can she not see and hear, and smell and taste?: Women students at coeducational land-grant universities in the American West, 1868-1917" (PhD diss., University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 2002), 258.
7. Ibid.
8. Cahn, 89.
9. Mabel Lee, *History of Physical Education and Sports in the U.S.A.* (New York: Wiley, 1983).
10. Gerber, et al., 4-6.
11. Swanson and Spears, 184.
12. Gerber, et al., 58.
13. S. F. Richardson, "Physical Exercises for Women." *Review of Reviews* (November 1859): 480., quoted in Karen Kenney, "The Realm of Sports and the Athletic Woman 1850-1900" in *Her Story in Sport: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports*, ed. Reet Howell (West Point, New York: Leisure Press, 1982), 109.
14. Mary R. Carson, "A History of Physical Education at Smith College." (MA Thesis, Smith College, 1951), quoted in Kenney, 109.
15. Victoria Summer, "The Historical Development of the Undergraduate Program in Health and Physical Education at Wellesley College." Special Project, Wellesley College, 1939, quoted in Kenney, 109.
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17. Ibid., 110.
18. Kenney and Richardson, 111.
19. Peter Castelow, "Katherine Montgomery: A Change of Heart on Women's Competitive Athletics in the Early 20th Century" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2005), 69.
20. Mildred M. Usher, "A History of Women's Intercollegiate Athletics at Florida State University From 1905-1972" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1980), 110.
21. Kenney, 111.
22. Cahn, 66, and Castelow, 69.
23. Louis Means, *Intramurals: Their Organization and Administration*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963) np. Usher, "A History of Women's Intercollegiate Athletics at Florida State University From 1905-1972."
24. Swanson and Spears, 186.

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Usher, 10.
28. Usher, 10 and Cahn, 110.
29. Swanson and Spears, 186.
30. Gordon, *Gender and Higher Education in the Progressive Era*, 4.
31. Lee, 68.
32. Kenney, 109.
33. Castelow, 68.
34. Debra Shattuck, "Bats, Balls, and Books: Baseball and Higher Education for Women at Three Eastern Women's Colleges, 1866–1891," *Journal of Sport History* (Summer 1992): 97–98, 103, 107.
35. Lee, np.
36. Marc Thomas Horger, "Play by the Rules: The Creation of Basketball and the Progressive Era, 1891–1917" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2001), 252.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Senda Berenson The Significance of Basket Ball for Women in http://clio.fivecolleges.edu/smith/berenson/5pubs/bball_women/index.shtml?page=35
40. Lee,
41. Ibid.
42. P. Welch, *History of American Physical Education and Sport*. (Springfield, IL: Charles E. Thomas, 1996), np.
43. <http://www.womensbasketballmuseum.com>
44. Lee, .
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47. Welch, 240–41.
48. Swanson and Spears, 217.

Chapter 4

Women's Physical Education and Athletics at KU

Introduction

Kansas University opened its doors to both men and women in the fall of 1866. “The University of Kansas had its origin in ‘An act of Congress, approved January 29, 1861, granting 72 sections of public land for the endowment of a State University.’ The State accepted the donation, and located the institution at Lawrence, by act of Legislature, passed February 20, 1863.”¹ Boasting an enrollment of 55 students that fall day, September 12, 1866, KU had already flexed its equitable muscles by including 26 women in its first class.

Similar to many schools of that time period, a large majority of the students were actually admitted into the Preparatory Department rather than beginning proper college level courses. In fact, during the next year 1867/1868, 105 students were at KU, 103 in the Preparatory Department and 2, both women, in the Collegiate Department.² This would continue for many years, with the Preparatory Department making up the majority of the student body.

According to KUHISTORY.com, “During KU’s very early years, women were often the school’s most stellar students, a status permanently cemented on June 11, 1873, when Flora Richardson delivered KU’s first valedictory address at the school’s first commencement ceremony. Meanwhile, women began securing positions on KU’s faculty as early as 1868, when Cynthia A. Smith started teaching French language and

literature. She paved the way for other early female faculty members such as Elizabeth P. Leonard and the redoubtable Kate Stephens.”³

Women’s Physical Education and Athletics at KU

Women’s athletics at Kansas sprang from the lives of early coeds and the exercise and play they participated in as a matter of course. Over the years, exercise became increasingly systematized and organized, and sports began to materialize. Only since the 1970s, have athletics been permitted to maintain a presence separate from that of the physical education department and intramural sports. For much of the time, entities such as the Physical Education Department, the Women’s Athletic Association, and various sport-specific clubs worked together, co-sponsoring activities and competitions, sharing equipment and resources, and strategizing to meet common goals. These entities are so interrelated that the history of one is often the history of the others. This chapter, therefore, focuses not only on official teams, but the groups, organizations, and administration that comprise the spectrum of experience of women’s athletics at Kansas.

Women have had an opportunity to run, jump, shoot and swim since the early 1890s. However, until 1893 there was no organized physical education program at KU, and women were not encouraged to develop their athletic prowess. It would have been considered unladylike. But in the fall of 1893, “systematic gymnasium work for men and women” was instituted, according to an early *Jayhawker* yearbook, and women had

their first chance to stretch their limbs in friendly competition.⁴ As written in the 1893–1894 University of Kansas Catalog under the heading “Physical Training,”

The University is glad to announce that provision has been made to afford all students an opportunity for physical training. Instructors have been secured, a large room, with baths adjoining, is fitted up with the necessary lockers and apparatus, and regular classes in physical culture have been established, the women’s classes under the charge of a woman instructor. Attendance on these classes is optional with Seniors and Juniors, required of Sophomores and Freshmen; each class meeting three times a week. Special attention will be paid to the individual needs of each student, and to each will be assigned such forms of exercise as seem best suited to promote health and proper physical development. In addition to the indoor work required, facilities for additional training are provided for those who desire it, or who may wish to compete for membership in University athletic teams; and such membership is open to all students who maintain a satisfactory standing in their studies.⁵

Stone notes, “The first person hired to teach physical education for women was May Clark-Pierce. Pierce, a Harvard graduate and an instructor in “elocution, oratory and physical culture,” stayed at Kansas for five years, until 1898. That year Cora McCullom-Smith took over. She taught classes until 1903, when Mary C. Fish stepped in.”⁶

“Fish taught at KU until 1911. It was during her tenure that some women of the University were introduced to an interesting new game. They called it “basket ball,” and they enjoyed it so much that one group formed a team. In 1903 a “nice gentleman” and a Miss Bennett coached the team. The gentleman was James Naismith, the man who had invented the game just a dozen years before at Springfield College.”⁷ James Naismith had come to the University in 1898 as an Athletic Director and coach of various teams. He would later serve as the Head of the Physical Education Department.

Even though Naismith arrived in 1898, according to an editorial in the *Kansas University Weekly*, basketball was actually brought to the University two years earlier, in 1896, because the game was “especially well-adapted for girls as quickness and accuracy count instead of muscular strength.”⁸ The first women’s intercollegiate athletic team representing KU played an eight-game schedule against Haskell, Ottawa, Baker, Washburn and that perennial Kansas adversary, Missouri. The team’s record was a remarkable 6-2, and both losses were close: Haskell-8, Kansas-2, and Ottawa-25, Kansas-24.⁹ Unfortunately, the team disbanded after that season. KU women wouldn’t play another intercollegiate game for more than sixty years.

For the next 10 years, there was little mention of athletics for women at the University. They did continue with their physical culture classes as noted in the catalogs. It was not until the beginning of the 1900s that the women were able to organize and receive press on doing so.

Athletics during this time period was relatively controversial. Verbrugge notes, while physical activity for the sake of health was encouraged, athletic competition had the potential of going too far.¹⁰ While some were critical of the “negative effects” of exercise, the women at KU began to organize. In the *1911 Jayhawker*, Women’s Athletics included aesthetic dancing in which there was an event where a “twelve-mile marathon was danced.”¹¹ Girls’ “Basket Ball” was mentioned. The women were divided into three groups for basketball: heavyweights, slims, and midgets. A monthly tournament was played. Unfortunately, there was no record of the outcome of the games since men were not permitted to attend.¹²

The Women's Athletic Association

In February of 1912 it was reported by the *Graduate Magazine*, that "The girls at the University have organized an Athletic Association patterned after the men's organization of similar character. The association is divided into two sections, the Reds and the Blues, and several contests between the divisions have already been held. Basket-ball is the only sport which has been attempted as yet, but certain track events and more games may be added to the list before the close of the school year. Contests with other institutions will not be held."

To close the school year, The 1912 *Jayhawker* included the Women's Athletic Association after the Men's Athletics pages. It was mentioned that the association was formed, "as a result of the demand on the part of the athletically inclined girls to participate in some kind of systematized sport."¹³ An article in the yearbook continued,

Basketball is the only sport as yet where a championship has been undertaken, but in tennis, a tournament will be held late in the spring. Baseball, volleyball and track enthusiasts take possession of the floor at various times and the mermaids trouble the water twice a week. Great rivalry exists between the Crimson and the Blues and a victory on either side is prized as is a Kansas Victory over Missouri. Each side has a captain for each sport and each sport has a manager under the supervision of Nell Martindale, who is general manager of sports."¹⁴

In an attempt to closely duplicate what honors the male athletes on campus were accustomed to, the WAA made the decision to award letters to the female athletes. On October 15, 1912, the *Daily Kansan* reported, "Women Athletes to Receive 'K's'." The article continues, "Women excelling in athletics in the University, this year will be awarded 'K's' by the Women's Athletic Association. The emblem will be distinctive

and will be awarded to seniors only.” Francis Black explains that “The idea is to award insignias—modifications of the Varsity ‘K’s’—of original design. They are to be of red felt to be worn on sweaters.” The K’s were to be given to women who played in the finals of hockey, tennis and basketball, and volleyball and indoor baseball were to be added later. The letters are “granted by the executive committee which consists of four faculty advisors; one member from each class; and the officers of the association.”¹⁵

However not all faculty and men of the University were thrilled with the idea of the Women’s Athletic Association awarding “letters.” On October 30, 1912, the *Daily Kansan* ran the story “This ‘K’ Business is Getting Serious.” Professor H. A. Rice of the athletic board (men’s) went on record saying, “The wearing of the ‘K’ letters, by women of the university, unless they are engaged to the men, cheapens the value of the letters,” and that “the letters play much the same part as the fraternity pin. It is the symbol of the university that is conferred only as an honor. Fraternities have come, by custom, to allow their pins to be worn only by a sister, mother, or a wife to be of its owner. This idea follows very closely with that of the letter. Besides it makes the girl appear as a university athlete.”¹⁶

Unfortunately, as this debate continued, the membership of the WAA began to dwindle. As a result, the *Daily Kansan* reported on October 12th, “Small Numbers Kept W.A.A. from Business.” Apparently, “so few members turned up to the meeting of the W.A.A. that they were forced to adjourn.” The president, Francis Black, “appointed one girl from each class to work up her particular class membership.”¹⁷

Physical Education

While the WAA was in the process of drumming up membership and debating the awarding of letters, the Physical Education Department was busy testing lung capacity and strength. The *Daily Kansan* reports in October 22, 1912, "Phenomenal records in breathing and strength tests were established by three K. U. girls during the physical examinations." Margaret S. Beckwith, an instructor in the department of physical education, declared "I have never seen the records of lung breathing, which was raised to 275 cu. in., the grip of the hand, which was raised to 105, and the strength of the extensors test which was raised to 515 K, equaled in any institution." Beckwith also noted, "When it comes to enthusiasm for sports, the spirit shown by the K. U. girls cannot be beaten."¹⁸ The results of these tests were reported in the *Kansas University Alumni Magazine* in February of 1913 and included the following:

According to the measurements taken by Dr. Margaret L. Johnson of the department of physical education, the Kansas girl's taller and stronger than her Eastern collegiate sister. As compared with similar measurements of Eastern schools, the average Kansas girl is almost one inch taller than the Oberlin girl and about one-fourth inch higher than the Wellesley young women. The average weight at Wellesley is 119 pounds, at Kansas 117 and Oberlin 112. In strength, and lung capacity, the Kansas girl holds first place even above the average German girl. Her lung capacity is 165 cubic inches as opposed to 141.2 at Oberlin, 150 at Wellesley and 147 for the German girl. The tests for strength show even a greater advantage for the Western girl.¹⁹

Beckwith continues,

It has been interesting to compare the Kansas and the New England type of girl. As might be expected, a greater number of eastern girls swim, but in as great a proportion does the westerner excel in horseback riding. Basket ball, the general favorite, has about as many followers there as her. While I noticed extremely good dancers among K.U. girls, one sees more girls who do not dance here than in the east. It is my impression

that generally speaking, the eastern girl gets more training in informal gymnastics, but nothing pleases the girls here more than to turn the gymnasium hour into basket-ball, or volley ball.²⁰

Spearheading the testing was Dr. Margaret L. Johnson who the University hired in 1911 as the Dean of the Women's Department of Physical Education. Dr. Johnson received her MD from the University of Colorado in 1908, and served the University until 1914. She writes in 1912, "The ideal American house-wife is the one who has entered into athletics during her girlhood. The sport participated in should be one which strengthens and at the same time gives no injurious strains." Dr. Johnson claims, "Athletics are not only good for women physically but also are a tonic for nervousness, and teaches a woman the art of submissiveness."²¹ A proponent of physical activity and athletics, Johnson was also responsible for implementing the "Swim test requirement" at KU that still exists today at colleges across the country.

As part of a national Red Cross campaign to get everybody in the country to learn to swim, swim test requirements at colleges and universities were instituted in the late 1910s. The University of Kansas was no different. Appearing in the *Daily Kansan*, Dr Johnson declared that, "Every girl desiring credit for freshman and sophomore gym work must first pass a satisfactory swimming quiz." She continued, "The girls will be given precedent over the boys and will be allowed its use three or four days out of each week." Since the pool was broken at the time, the girls would play tennis until it was fixed, as well as volleyball and basketball.²² In June of 1913 the *Graduate Magazine* followed up with, "it was announced that all girls in the gymnasium classes would henceforth be required to learn to swim. The sailor stroke would be taught to the girls

as it was believed that this stroke is better for longer swims. Classes began work in swimming about a month before the close of the second semester, and the girls were required to be able to swim the length of the pool in order to get credit for the term's work in gymnasium.²³

Women's Athletic Association

In keeping up with colleges across the country and especially the Seven Sisters on the east coast, the WAA introduced hockey. The *Daily Kansan* reported on November 13, 1912, "Hockey Joins Ranks of Campus Sports," and continued, "Field hockey is the latest sport to be taken up by the Women's Athletic Association and it bids fair to be the most popular as well." "The girls expect to play match games in the spring. During the winter, or whenever the field is in poor shape, they will play ring hockey in the gymnasium." "Kansas is one of the first western universities to take up hockey for girls. The game is new everywhere in this country, having been introduced only a year or two ago by Miss Constance Appleby, the English hockey expert."²⁴ Appleby would later visit the University and speak at one of the WAA's "Field Days".

While still only a few years old, the Women's Athletic Association continued to add more sports and increase membership. Noted in the *Jayhawker* of 1913, "Basketball, volleyball, hockey, tennis and swimming are the chief sports. Each class has its teams and each separate sport has its manager. During the entire year there have been enough sports running to allow everyone to take part in some one all the time."²⁵

Already the WAA was feeling the growing pains especially when it came to facilities. On March 28, 1913, in the *Daily Kansan*, Dr. Johnson reported, “The girls have two courts reserved for their use...but they are in no sort of condition. However we expect to have the courts fixed up before the middle of April,” and claimed that “About fifty girls have already signified their intention to play.”²⁶ By 1914, the women of the University had their own tennis courts. Five new courts were completed south of the gymnasium for the exclusive playing of the K.U. women.²⁷

Out of town competitions were still a ways off. Most competitions during this period were held between classes or organizations. The WAA offered the opportunity for women not interested in team competitions to join the association by accomplishing proficiency in rope climbing, fencing, folk dancing, marching, and Indian club swinging.²⁸

Quiet Period

Possibly due to World War I, the Women’s Athletic Association failed to get much press between 1914 and 1915. The information reported in the 1914 *Jayhawker* showed no evidence of team sports. Under the heading “Women’s Athletics”, there were photos of a “playground class” and “girls gymnasium classes.” There was no mention of the Women’s Athletic Association in the 1915 *Jayhawker*.

The *Graduate Magazine* of 1915 mentioned, however, that “by 1915, a hockey court, a baseball diamond, and five tennis courts were laid out in the Girls’ Athletic Feld (sp), behind the Gymnasium. Here the junior and senior women met for archery

practice. The girls of the freshman class had two basketball teams and the sophomores had one, during the past season. Next year plans will probably be made for a contest in which teams from each class will participate.”²⁹

WAA Official Constitution

The Women’s Athletic Association officially came out with their Constitution in 1915. It included:

Article I. Name

This Association shall be known as the Women’s Athletic Association of the University of Kansas.

Article II. Purpose

The purpose of the Women’s Athletic Association of the University of Kansas is to promote athletic sports and the development of physical efficiency among the women of the University of Kansas.

Article III. Membership

Section 1. This Association shall be open to any woman registered in the University of Kansas.

Section 2. Any woman desiring membership must file her application with the membership committee.

Article IV. Officers

Section 1. The officers of this Association shall consist of a President, Secretary-Treasurer and General Student Manager.

Section 2. An Executive Board shall be composed of the officers of the Association, the instructional force in the department of Physical Education for women, and a representative from each of the four classes.

Section 3. Terms of Office. These officers shall be elected by ballot at the first meeting in November to serve for one year.

Section 4. Duties of the Officers.

(a.). It shall be the duty of the President to call and preside at all meetings of the Association, and of the Executive Board and to appoint all standing committees.

(b). It shall be the duty of the Secretary-Treasurer to notify members of all meetings, to conduct all other correspondence of the association, to keep record of all proceedings, to preserve the same as an

Association record, to present a report of the annual meeting, to take charge of the funds of the Association and to record her report in the association record.

(c). It shall be the duty of the General Student Manager to perform the usual duties of such an officer.

(d). It shall be the duty of the Executive Board to have general supervision and control of all athletic affairs of the Association, and to appoint such athletic committees as shall see necessary.

Article V. Meetings

Section 1. There shall be an annual business meeting of the Association in November.

Section 2. A meeting of the Association may be called at any time by the President at her discretion or by three members of the Executive Board.

Section 3. One fifth of all the members of the Association shall constitute a quorum.

Article VI. Amendments

Section 1. A majority vote of the members of this Association shall be required to alter or amend this Constitution.

Section 2. Proposed alterations of, or amendments to, this Constitution must be posted on the bulletin boards and read at the meeting preceding their consideration.

By-Laws

- I. Disputes. All questions of debate shall be decided by Robert's Rule of Order.
- II. Vacancies. All vacancies of the Board shall be filled by ballot of the rest of the Board.
- III. Contestants. Any contestant for Athletic honors must be a member of this Association.
- IV. Activities. All members of the Association, having passed such physical examinations as may be required, may enter any of the following sports: field meet, tennis tournament, inter-class basketball, swimming meet, hockey, etc.
- V. Awards.

Section 1. Awards for athletic achievements shall consist of numerals to be given to individuals representing their class in any inter-class contest.

Sec. 2. Cups, medals or other complimentary reward shall be awarded to groups or individuals entering in athletic competition.

Sec. 3. The "K" shall be awarded only for inter-collegiate competition.

Sec. 4. An emblem, a crimson "A" with blue K.U. on the cross bar, shall be awarded as representing a high grade merit for the accomplishment of physical efficiency and a certain number of points won without

necessarily including participation in inter-class or inter-collegiate contests.

VI. Point System. Points governing awarding of the “A” shall be awarded according to the following point list.³⁰

Vanity Fair/How Soon We Forget

The women’s Athletic Association was listed under the heading Vanity Fair in the 1916 *Jayhawker*. Perhaps this was in reference to the humorous weekly from New York that ran until 1863 or the British weekly famous for its caricatures that eventually sold its name to Conde Nast. Could it have been referencing the fictitious place ruled by Beelzebub, in the book *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan or most likely the follow up “Vanity Fair” by Thackeray? Regardless of what was meant by the title, the WAA continued to succeed. The article in the yearbook reads

The desire for organized athletics among women, which would be recognized by the other colleges and universities, became so strong last fall that the WAA was formed. By basing its organization on the stimulation of a desire for athletics among women, and on the creation of a united, democratic, feminine student body, this association has already gained a foothold on the hill that promises to be permanent. The WAA has already proven itself to be an active organization. Over 400 women, half of the entire co-ed enrollment, showed their interest in the WAA and its purposes by attending a banquet given by this association in the spring. The entire management of the annual basket ball tournament of high school girls, the officiating and the placing of the girls in reliable boarding houses, was all done by women with the most satisfactory results.

In order to give the individual athlete some distinction, an award of merit is granted to every woman, who, by activity in women’s sports, if physically qualified, can win the seventy-five points necessary to gain a large red A with smaller blue KU letters across it. The honor of wearing one of these letters is an incentive to the women who would otherwise care only for the gym credit. A “K” will be awarded only to winners in some intercollegiate game.³¹

That same year, the *Graduate Magazine* notes, “A women’s athletic association is really a fact at the University. The organization was perfected December 10, at a meeting held in Robinson Gymnasium. A woman does not need to be an athlete in order to belong. Neither does she have to pay dues. Her interest and enthusiasm are wanted. In short, this is a new ‘get together’ movement among University women.”³²

How soon we forget. Newspaper clippings from 1915 as well as a later *Jayhawker*, provide evidence that the WAA was supposedly organized in the fall of 1915. An excerpt from the University *Daily Kansan* on December 2, 1915, attempts to rally the women of the University to support the beginning of the association.

If 400 women students are interested in athletics enough to sign the petition which will be circulated on the Hill the last of this week, Kansas University will have a real Women’s Athletic Association. Dr. Alice Goetz, the women’s athletic director and her assistants Miss Gladys Elliot and Miss Hazel Pratt, are intensely interested in the project and are only waiting for the girls to take the initiative in the affair. Every woman in Kansas University should be proud to think she has a chance to sign a petition for a Women’s Athletic Association, which, if successful, will be the entering wedge for placing K.U. women’s sports on the map.³³

Regardless of when the association actually began, the WAA was boasting memberships of nearly 700 women by the 1920s.³⁴ With the intent of “fostering sportsmanship and good fellowship,” the WAA found time to “promote a social impetus in two big parties each year—one a matinee dance for women and the other a formal party that both men and women attended.”³⁵

Physical Education: Passing the Torch to Hazel Pratt

Just as the Women's Athletic Association was making strides, so too was the Department of Physical Education. Dr. Florence Sherbon was hired in 1917 as the Head of Women's Physical Education. Sherbon received her Ph.B. in 1892, and her A.M. and her M.D. in 1904, all from Iowa State University. She resigned in 1919. After many years with the "Better Babies" and "Fitter Families" program, Sherbon returned to KU as a Professor of Home Economics.

Sharing the concerns that some educators continued to have about athletic participation by females, Dr Sherbon felt it necessary to renovate part of Robinson Gymnasium as noted in the article "Rest Room for Girls." The article in the December 1917 issue of the *Graduate Magazine* read,

The room in the east end of Robinson Gymnasium that has formerly been used as the faculty handball room is being fitted up as a rest room for women, where those women not physically able to exercise will be given the rest cure at their regular exercise period. Fifteen cots have been ordered for use in the room. A new door is being cut so that entrance to the room may be made without going through the gymnasium. The room will be equipped with shades and practically turned into a sleeping porch.

Many women will be required to use the rest room, according to Dr. Florence Sherbon, head of the women's department of physical education. However, she said that this does not mean that there are a large number of women who will be required to use the room regularly.

Women who are in the regular classes may be overworked and fatigued on some days, Doctor Sherbon said, and when such is the case those women will be required to rest instead of exercise. There are others, she said who need building up and those will be required to take whatever rest seems necessary to bring them back to normal health.³⁶

Following Dr. Sherbon was a young woman who was intent on developing the women's physical education and sports program at the University. According to salary

cards located in the Spencer Archives, Miss Hazel Pratt was hired for the 1915/1916 school year as an Instructor in the Department of Physical Education. In 1918 she was named the Coach of Women's Athletics. For the first time at the University, intramural sports were played where teams from sororities and other clubs on campus entered tournaments as opposed to teams made up by class rank. At that time, Miss Pratt said, "This is the first time in four years the courts have not been monopolized by the men while women waited to practice until men were at meals or asleep."³⁷ The intramural activities proved to be a success as intramural champions were crowned for the first time.

On Campus

The *Jayhawker* of 1918 reports that,

The enrollment of the University dropped this year from 3,457 to 2,846 a direct result of the war. Hundreds of students have left their work uncompleted to fight for democracy, many faculty members have given up their tasks and are lending their aid to the nation, while the ones left behind are doing all they can in supporting administration war measures. The University's list of men in the service has gone well over the 1,200 mark, and more names are being added to the honor roll each week. Four hundred students, both men and women, are doing war work, including the YMCA, Red Cross and government work. The women have gone from Bell Memorial Hospital as Red Cross nurses.³⁸

While many students had left the University to serve the country, the Women's Athletic Association remained strong. The *Jayhawker* of 1918 included information on basketball, swimming, field hockey, baseball, tennis and the Women's Circus, an annual event put on by the WAA.

One of the major events of the 1918/1919 school year was the return of James Naismith from World War I. According to an article in the *Daily Kansan* from February 7, 1919, after serving as the head of the international YMCA in France for eighteen months, Dr. Naismith would be returning to assume his position as the Head of the Department of Physical Education.³⁹

Full Steam Ahead

That same school year seemed to be an especially productive one for the Women's Athletic Association. As the athletic competitions continued to evolve, so too did the other events that the Women's Athletic Association promoted. The annual events included the May Fete, the WAA Circus and the Jay Walk. The May Fete festival consisted of dancing, plays, side shows and the coronation of a May Queen. The event was open to the entire campus, males and females. The Circus was perhaps the most popular of the events. The *Daily Kansan* reported "The World's Greatest Indoor Circus will be given in Robinson Gymnasium."⁴⁰ The acts included chariot races, clown stunts, a big diving act, a bareback rider, a troupe of trained dogs and all the daring acrobatic feats shown at any big circus."⁴¹ The circus was open for all of the women of the University. Predating Sadie Hawkins Day, the women of the Athletic Association hosted the Jay Walk. "The big chance of the year for rank feminists to assert themselves and ask the men for dates is for the Jay Walk. It is permissible and conventional for women to invite the men to this dance, and they may even have the privilege of paying the admission price."⁴²

The Women's Athletic Association was fortunate enough to promote their organization each year when they played host to the girls' state basketball tournament. The women of the association often refereed or kept score. The Association benefited through the exposure and the gate receipts. "In another effort to promote sports among Kansas high school girls, the WAA hosted an annual "Mayday Playday" which saw almost two hundred young women participate in sports as diverse as archery, dance, swimming, volleyball, and softball. The 'Playday' also provided the best female athletes from KU with the opportunity to compete against the best women from other schools in eastern Kansas."⁴³

Another major event that took place in 1919 was the "first time in history that Kansas has had Colored teams." The *Daily Kansan* reported that the gymnasium was given over to African American students for the "colored women's basketball game" for the first time in the history of the University, the proceeds of which went to promoting "the growth of colored women's athletics."⁴⁴

In April of 1919 the *Daily Kansan* reported that "Dorothy Cole, an instructor in women's physical education at K.U., states that 'all forms of relays, ball games and folk dances are being substituted in place of formal floor work,'" and that women are more enthusiastic about these sports, including volley ball, than they were about the "regular floor work," especially "in the case of those women who are interested in municipal play-grounds, since the work is along that particular line."⁴⁵

With the growing enthusiasm for sports came the announcement in the *Daily Kansan* that "more than two hundred women turned out for inter-class basketball, and

more than one hundred for the inter-organization games.” As a result of the more organized events, the WAA began to award sweaters for participation in woman’s athletics.⁴⁶

Miss Hazel Pratt

Miss Hazel Pratt and the Women’s Athletic Association at the University of Kansas were pioneers in unfamiliar territory. As the Coach of Women’s Athletics, Miss Pratt was leading the charge. Attending the convention of the American Physical Education Association in Chicago, Miss Pratt “made a talk in which she explained how the Women’s Athletic Association is conducted at the University of Kansas.” The *Daily Kansan* continued, “She told of the large membership at K.U. and of the various activities carried on by the organization. The Women’s Athletic Association seems to be much more successful in the University of Kansas than it is in a good many other colleges, according to reports made by the delegates at the convention.”⁴⁷

Miss Pratt’s next trip took her to a meeting of the Women Physical Directors of Colleges in Kansas, held in Emporia. The article reads,

This meeting was for the purpose of regulating and standardizing inter-collegiate athletics for women in the state of Kansas. At a meeting of the deans of colleges which was held at a previous date it was decided by the deans that intercollegiate athletics were beneficial. At the meeting Saturday of the physical directors these regulations were drawn up, which are to be presented at the next meeting of the deans of women of Kansas for approval. The regulations in brief are

1. The coach shall be a woman.
2. A thorough physical examination shall be made twice a year.
3. A series of intra-mural games must be played first and from these a Varsity team picked.

4. Colleges of 200 women students or more may not play freshmen in inter-collegiate basket ball but in inter-collegiate basket ball schools which have less than 200 may.
5. Only two trips may be made during a season.
6. Schools entering the conference must have a WAA to back up the finances.
7. The visiting team pays its own railroad fare and the home team entertains them.
8. The fee of the referee is divided between the competing teams.
9. The referee must be a woman.
10. The chaperone must be approved by the dean of women.
11. All players must be passing in the minimum amount of work required and have no outstanding conditions or failure.
12. Games must be open to the entire student body.
13. A uniform set of rules drawn up by a rules committee must be adhered to.⁴⁸

The success of both the Women's Athletic Association and the Department of Physical Education was being recognized. In the May 1920 issue of the *Graduate Magazine*, it was reported "that women who are prominent in athletics during their college careers continue that work after leaving school is attested by the record of the senior basketball team of 1917. The personnel of this team were Margaret Hodder, Dorothy Tucker, Freda Daum, Joyce Brown, Sarah Trant Malott, Dorothy Querfeld, Nell Leibengood, Lucile Sterling and Ruth Endicott Brown. Three years after their graduation, seven of these nine women are in athletic work, three of them brought teams to the state tournament at Lawrence recently, and three others were officials in the tournament."⁴⁹

Unfortunately, intercollegiate competition was short-lived. At the Central Sectional Conference of American College Women in 1920, it was determined that "women may not take part in intercollegiate athletics." The KU delegation was not able to sway the vote.

Many of the myths of the ill effects of physical activity continued to pervade the university community. Even as late as 1923, there was opposition to female participation in athletics and worse, it was at the hand of a female instructor of physical education as reported in an interview January 10, 1923 in the *Daily Kansan*:

“Women are not quite ready for competitive athletics,” asserted Miss Margaret Barto, assistant Instructor of physical education. “By this term I do not mean that tennis, track, and aquatic sports should be barred from women’s athletic programs, but the more strenuous sports such as basketball, football, and volley-ball. It is true that women are playing those games in the East, but they are professional athletes and can live under rigid training rules; and, too, they have no studies to keep up between times. The average girl in the university could not stand the nervous strain that the athlete is obliged to undergo.

I do not mean, of course, that women are inferior in sportsmanship or in physical ability, but I do mean that their finer nervous systems could not stand up under the double burden of studying and engaging in competitive athletics.”⁵⁰

Summary

Ruth Hoover succeeded Margaret Barto in the late 1920s and went on to become one of the most important figures in the development of women’s sports at the University of Kansas. Under Hoover, the WAA thrived. During the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, as many as 1,000 women annually took part in intramural games and sports.⁵¹

Marlene Mawson, credited with beginning what we currently know today as KU Women’s Athletics, took over the duties of Ruth Hoover in 1968, when she was appointed director of women’s sports. With Mawson came the first serious attempts to initiate a schedule of intercollegiate athletic competitions.

It wasn't until 1974, after the passage of Title IX, that the women of the University of Kansas finally received funding from the Kansas Legislature. Combined with money from the KU Student Senate, the women's athletic department used the money from the Legislature to hire an athletic director (Marion Washington), pay coaches for the first time, purchase better and safer equipment, and travel outside the state to compete.⁵²

Nothing typifies the complete emancipation of the modern girl from her old shackles of prudishness and ultra-conventionality as much as the place she has taken in the field of athletics. No girl today can carry on her social life without some knowledge of sports. No longer is it fashionable for girls to be shrinking, fainting violets, nor to ask dumb questions at all athletic events.⁵³

Notes: Chapter Four, Women's Physical Education and Athletics at KU

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31. *Jayhawker*, 1916, 371.
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35. *Jayhawker*, 1922, 172.
36. *Graduate Magazine*, "A Rest Room for Girls," December 1917, 84.
37. *University Daily Kansan* "Women Had To Work To Play," May 28, 1939.
38. *Jayhawker*, 1918, 103.
39. *University Daily Kansan*, "Dr. Naismith to Return from War Work Abroad," February 7, 1919.
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50. *University Daily Kansan* "Women not ready for valley games," January 10, 1923.
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52. Stone, "Goddess of the Chase," 22-26.
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Chapter 5

Kansas Athletics

As is true at many other schools, there is a lack of good information about WAAs and women's athletics from the 1920s or 1930s directly to the 1960s. Nearly all information, images, and reports regarding the topic disappear. Insofar as yearbooks are a reliable indicator of student interest, it appears that women's sports dipped in popularity from the 1930s through the 1950s.

Perhaps one of the only events that maintained its popularity was the "Mayday Playday." The KU News Bureau reported in 1955 that, "The biggest 'Mayday Playday' ever staged by the Women's Athletic Association at the U of Kansas is anticipated Saturday, (April 30) with advance registrations from 192 guests from 14 Northeast high schools. The Playday is conducted for the benefit of the upperclass high school women of the area who are particularly interested in physical education activities."¹ And in 1956 there was similar information from the KU News Bureau: "The annual Play Day sponsored by the Women's Athletic Association at the U of Kansas will attract more than 200 high school girls to the campus Saturday. KU physical education students will supervise softball, volleyball, and basketball games during the day. Entertainment will include numbers by the Quack club members, Tau Sigma Dancers and trampoline experts."²

By the 1960s, the women's liberation movement was on the rise, sports were on the rebound, and the call for intercollegiate activity became louder. The growing size of

most women's sports programs rendered the structure of the WAAs ineffective, and across the nation such organizations were being disbanded in favor of a more centralized and authoritative administrative model.³ Sometime during the 1960s, the women of the University of Kansas started the Women's Recreation Association. The WRA was responsible for organizing and sponsoring the intramural program. The serious athletes at KU were now playing basketball and softball in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) due to the lack of opportunities at the University. Mona Millikan writes in the *Alumni Magazine*, "The nearest K.U. women come to a varsity program is in the three Sports Days, which offer limited intercollegiate competition in field hockey, volleyball, and softball. Distance is the major problem with Sports Days. We can't miss school."⁴

Intercollegiate sports were finally a reality in 1968 when the Women's Recreation Association "announced plans for the formation of women's intercollegiate basketball and volleyball teams. Tentative schedules of three home games and three games away plus state sportsdays have been planned for both teams."⁵ Along with the addition of basketball and volleyball, the Field Hockey team also began playing other schools. The gymnastics team also scheduled outside meets and the tennis team did the same.

The next hurdle for the women at KU was the lack of funding. Hank Young wrote in the *Kansas Alumni Magazine* in 1973 about their troubles, "They Move on Dedication." He mentioned that since the beginning of women's sports at KU (1968), "Women's teams have gone to national competition in basketball, volleyball and

gymnastics, and this year it could possibly compete nationally in golf, track and field, and softball,” and that “the main hindrance is budget. Their allotment of \$9,000 through the Student Senate to cover the cost of eight team sports is limiting. They can compete on a state level within their budget, but KU is getting the quality of athletes now who should be competing on a national level.”⁶

Later that year, the *Kansas Alumni Magazine* reported,

If a Board of Regents recommendation is approved by next year’s Kansas Legislature, the women’s sports program at KU will receive \$58,575 for the 1974-1975 school year.

Which women’s sport at KU would receive the largest chunk of the new money, is allocated by the Legislature, is questionable, according to Sharon Drysdale, women’s athletic director.

“It depends on whether they enter regional, state or national competition, the size of the team and where the particular competition is held,” she said. “In short, the better the team, the more expensive it is.”

Coeds on Mt. Oread now compete in eight sports: volleyball, basketball, softball, track and field, gymnastics, swimming, field hockey and tennis. In the past this entire program has been funded by a Student Senate allocation, which for 1972-73 was \$9,367.

A series of meetings that led to the Regents’ recommendation began last fall, when women’s athletic directors from six state schools met to discuss their intercollegiate sports programs. A Committee to Investigate the Status of Women’s Intercollegiate Sports was organized at KU by Chancellor Raymond Nichols and chaired by Miss Drysdale.

Marlene Mawson, assistant professor of physical education and a member of the KU committee, summed up the importance of the Regents’ recommendation to women athletes at KU.

“Many employers will ask how much intercollegiate experience you have had before considering you for a coaching position. This is where we see the need for the program in terms of educational value, and this is why we feel it should be kept in an academic atmosphere,” she said.⁷

While this was a significant step for the women at the University, the money was only a fraction of what the men's program received. Some of the teams were still transporting themselves to games and sleeping in cars, traveling without the finances to afford hotels. Another major discrepancy between the programs was the lack of scholarships for the female athletes.

In August of 1976, came the news from the Kansas Athletic Corporation announcing "plans to contribute funds to the K.U. women's athletics program so that, within five years, scholarship funds available for women athletes at the University will equal the funds provided for male athletes at KU participating in non-revenue sports." The University of Kansas Division of Information provided more, "In announcing the program," Chancellor Dykes said, "We are committed to achieving a balanced and excellent program of women's sports at the U of K, and we are delighted that the men's athletics program is providing this important support. The spirit of cooperation between our men's and women's intercollegiate athletics program is unmatched by other colleges and universities across the nation, and I am confident it will lead to further high achievements by our athletes."⁸

With more money and scholarships on the horizon, the Women's Athletics Program took another leap forward. Linda Schild of the *Lawrence Journal World* reported that the women would be moving from the Physical Education Department in to the Athletics Building. "Physical education was absolutely incredible with their assistance she related. For the first month and a half, the department helped house the program and lent equipment and moral support. Women's Intercollegiate Sports then

moved into a cubbyhole in the Athletic Corporation Ticket Office, from which it moved Sept. 9 in to the former Sports Information Office.”⁹

As the program continued to grow, so too did the need for more funding. After learning that the Student Senate was cutting at funding following the 1979 season, the Council of Women Athletes at KU met to give the women the news. The *University Daily Kansan* reported, “The Council of Women Athletes met to bring the athletes together and give them information on the status of women’s athletics at the U of Kansas. The U is currently requesting an increase of \$85,115 for women’s athletics from the Kansas Legislature. This would help offset the decision by the Student Senate to stop funding women’s athletics after fiscal year 1979.”¹⁰

Del Shankel, the Assistant Vice Chancellor was aware of the seriousness. The Lawrence Journal World reported, “KU official warns of ‘severe problems’ of the Kansas Legislature denies a request by KU for women’s athletics funds.” If not approved, he mentioned three options, “(a) cut the women’s budget ‘severely’,” (b) persuade the KU student senate to reinstate some funding that it has dropped, and (c) increase internal university funds to support the program.”¹¹

Even with support from various political figures, the money was not approved. An organized relay by the women and coaches from Allen Fieldhouse to Topeka with a petition was not enough to gain the support.¹² With priority given to the revenue producing sports, AD Marion Washington said that cuts to program were inevitable.¹³

Looming in the background during most of this was the clarification and enforcement of Title IX. Title IX reads, “No person in the United States shall, on the

basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal assistance.” When it comes to athletics, it is interpreted using the 3 prong test. A recipient of federal funds can demonstrate compliance with Title IX by meeting any one of the three prongs.

1. Prong one - Providing athletic opportunities that are substantially proportionate to the student enrollment, OR
2. Prong two - Demonstrate a continual expansion of athletic opportunities for the underrepresented gender, OR
3. Prong three - Full and effective accommodation of the interest and ability of underrepresented gender.

Several complaints were filed concerning Title IX but the most legitimate one was reported by the *Lawrence Journal World*, August 4, 1978:

News of a complaint filed this week with the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare alleging inequities between men’s and women’s athletics at KU is being greeted as “business as usual” by KU officials.

Elizabeth Banks, assistant professor of classics and a member of the Kansas University Athletic Corp. (KUAC) board filed the four-part complaint Tuesday and forwarded copies to KU officials. Ms. Banks is also a former member of the Advisory Board for Women’s Athletics.

Ms. Banks alleged that KU uses the budget for men’s nonrevenue sports as a standard for women’s sports, which doesn’t take basketball and football into account. Under HEW guidelines, she said, revenue producing sports must be included when assessing equality between men’s and women’s athletics.

She also contended that although scholarships provided for women by the KUAC are supposed to be equal to scholarships for men in nonrevenue producing sports by 1980, women would only receive scholarship funds if there is enough money remaining after the men’s program is filled.¹⁴

As equality was questioned, there was major movement in the organization of the athletic program at the University. In June of 1979, it was announced that the “Athletic programs will merge in July.” The article in *Hilltopics* continued, “Programs will merge with Bob Marcum as the AD, and Marion Washington as the Associate AD. The 16 member Women’s Advisory Board and the 21-member U of K Athletic Corp will also merge. The new board will consist of 15 members. The K Club, now limited to male athletes will become an organization for all varsity athletes who have won letters in KU athletic competition.”¹⁵

Beginning in 1971, the female varsity athletes at the University participated in the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (AIAW), which was set up to provide governance and leadership in the assurance of standards of excellence and educational soundness in women’s intercollegiate athletics. The AIAW was forced to fold in 1983. The National Collegiate Athletic Association had previously only been involved in men’s athletics but in the 1981/1982 school year adopted Women’s Championships. The women also began competing in the Big Eight Conference.

A few Title IX plans later, the Women’s Athletic Program at the University of Kansas is thriving. Competing in the Big 12 Conference, KU offers women the opportunity to compete in ten varsity sports including basketball, cross country, golf, rowing, soccer, softball, swimming & diving, tennis, track & field, and volleyball. According to the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act report filed by the University of Kansas last year, 294 women participated on varsity athletic teams during the 2006-

2007 academic year. Kansas awarded nearly 3.2 million dollars of athletically related student aid to those female athletes. The University of Kansas continues to attract and produce some of the nation's top scholar-athletes. This is a true testament to the women that began the WAA back in 1912.

Notes, Chapter Five, Kansas Athletics

1. KU News Bureau, April 1955.
2. KU News Bureau, April 1956.
3. Katherine Saunders, *The Governance of Intercollegiate Athletics*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1977), 10.
4. Mona Millikan, "Women are Sportsmen, too," *Alumni Magazine*, February 1963, 7.
5. *University Daily Kansan*, "WRA forms Basketball, Volleyball Teams," November 20, 1968.
6. Hank Young, "They Move on Dedication," *Kansas Alumni*, February 1973, 11.
7. *Kansas Alumni*, "Women's Sports Program May Get Financial Boost," June 1973, 13.
8. "KU Athletic Corporation Adds Women's Athletics Scholarships." The University of Kansas Division of Information, August 1976.
9. Linda Schild, *Lawrence Journal World*. January 31, 1975.
10. *University Daily Kansan*, "Council provides information on women's athletics," February 23, 1978.
11. *Lawrence Journal World*. "Sports funding hike sought," April 1, 1978.
12. *Lawrence Journal World*. "Solon expected to urge funds for women's sports." April 3, 1978.
13. Mary Hoenk, "Team cuts loom in women's funding crisis." *University Daily Kansan*, April 25, 1978.
14. Meg Beatty, "Complaint causes no flap KU response quiet," *Lawrence Journal World*, August 4, 1978..
15. *Hilltopics*, "Athletic programs will merge in July." June 1979.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

According to Bell, “Early college sports for women have been largely unrecognized by historians because competition was within college between students (intramural) rather than between institutions (extramural).” Competitions included intramural, club, and sorority matches, in addition to “play days”. By 1936, 70% of colleges surveyed used this as a predominant form of sport participation for women. (Hult, 1994).¹

Nationally, the women at the Seven Sister schools on the East Coast were the driving force behind the college athletic movement during the Progressive Era. Not too far behind though were the women at the coed private institutions of Oberlin and Antioch. Even with the opening of the first public University of Iowa in 1855, it appears as though the model to follow was at the University of Wisconsin (1863).

The Women’s Athletic Association at Wisconsin got its start in 1902 largely due to concern that “Wisconsin was lagging behind other schools in this respect.” This was most likely in reference to the private women’s colleges on the east coast. The WAA worked closely with the department of physical education “promoting and sponsoring women's athletics and physical activity.” Hartman writes “Its scope extended beyond the realm of regulating sports, however. In addition to organizing competitions, the group hosted weekly teas and other social functions, orchestrated

entertainment for the general student population, and was a very successful fund raising machine—using profits to fund its own operation, as well as the scholarships that it distributed.”²

Almost ten years later, the University of Iowa, the nation’s first coed public university, finally organized a Women’s Athletic Association. The WAA at Iowa was “an intramural organization with both an athletic and social focus, organized in 1911 to “promote a spirit of fair play and sportsmanship among girls.” The WAA offered a variety of clubs, including Orchesis (dance), Seals (swimming), outing, hockey, canoeing, archery, badminton, tennis, basketball, and handicrafts. The group sponsored tournaments, play days, intramurals, sport club activities, classes in social dancing, and all-freshmen parties.”³

The women at the University of Kansas were not far behind gathering in 1912 to establish their Women’s Athletic Association. Modeled after the program at the University of Wisconsin, it may have been the rival Missouri which sparked the interest of the KU women. According to an article appearing in the University Daily Kansan, October 4, 1912, a meeting was scheduled to discuss the “welfare of girls in relation to athletics.”⁴ The article went on to note that a “Miss Noel, a member of the Fine Arts department, will talk on athletic work at Missouri. The girls at Missouri are taking up all of the major sports such as baseball, basket-ball, and tennis.”⁵ In fact, the women at the University of Missouri organized their Women’s Athletic Association in 1910. It was reorganized in 1912 due to lack of participation the previous years.⁶

The athletic lives of the women at the University of Kansas during the Progressive Era paralleled the lives of other women at major universities throughout the mid-west. With assistance from departments of Physical Education, Progressive Era women were given the opportunity to participate in organized athletics usually in the form of a Women's Athletic Association. The "athletic girl" embodied in the image of the 'New Woman' is a direct outgrowth of these women. While not always accepted by fellow students, the administration or society, the first female athletes at the university "confronted and overcame the contradiction inherent in being both 'woman' and 'athlete'." ⁷

Notes: Chapter Six, Conclusion

1. Richard C. Bell, "A History of Women in Sport Prior to Title IX," *The Sport Journal* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2007), <http://the.sportjournal.org/2007JournalVol10-No2/Bell01.asp>
2. Chris Hartman, "Health and Fun Shall Walk Hand in Hand": The First 100 Years of Women's Athletics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, <http://archives.library.wisc.edu/exhibits/athletics/athletics01intro.html>
3. Iowa Women's Archives, "Women's Recreation Association". <http://sdrclib.uiowa.edu/iwa/findingaids/html/UIWRA.htm>
4. *University Daily Kansan*, "Gym Girls To Meet," October 4, 1912.
5. Ibid
6. <http://muarchives.missouri.edu/physical1.html>
7. Cahn, p.29

Appendix

Women's College Sports Timeline

- 1890s More than a million American women will own and ride bicycles during the next decade. It is the first time in American history that an athletic activity for women will become widely popular.
- 1892 The journal *Physical Education* (a publication of the YMCA) devotes an issue to women, saying that women need physical strength and endurance and dismiss the popular idea that women are too weak to exercise.
- 1892 Gymnastics instructor Senda Berenson Abbott adapts James Naismith's basketball rules for women and introduces the game to her students at Smith College, where she became the first director of physical education in Jan. Her rules confine each player to one-third of the court.
- 1892 Louise Pound, (born Lincoln, NE June 30, 1872), enrolls at the University of Nebraska and earned a BA degree in 1892 and her MA in 1895. While in college she helped organize a girls' military company and she set a record at rifle target practice. She was the first woman named to the Lincoln Journal Sports Hall of Fame in 1954. She participated in tennis, golf, cycling, and ice skating, and also coached girls' basketball. She made pioneering contributions to American philology and folklore.
- 1893 Systematic gymnasium work for men and women" was instituted at the University of Kansas.
- 1893 May Clark-Pierce is hired as the first teacher of women's physical education at KU.
- 1894 The faculty of Vassar College refuses a tennis challenge made to its students from the students of Bryn Mawr College.
- 1895 The first organized athletics meeting is generally recognized as the "Field Day" at Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY, on Nov. 9. A group of "nimble, supple and vivacious girls" engaged in running and jumping events despite bad weather.
- 1895 Volleyball is invented in Holyoke, MA. By the 1990's, volleyball is the second-largest participation sport in the United States with more than 42 million participants. There is indoor and outdoor competition for boys and girls, men and women and co-ed teams.
- 1896 Susan B. Anthony says that "the bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world."

- 1896 The first women's intercollegiate basketball championship is played between Stanford and the University of California at Berkeley. Stanford wins 2-1 on April 4 before a crowd of 700 women!
- 1898 Cora McCullom-Smith hired to teach physical education at the University of Kansas.
- 1899 Senda Berenson develops a set of basketball rules for women and introduces the game to her undergraduate students at Smith College.
- 1900s Physical Education instructors strongly oppose competition among women, fearing it will make them less feminine.
- 1900 The first 19 women to compete in the modern Olympics Games in Paris, France, play in just three sports: tennis, golf, and croquet. Margaret I. Abbott is the first American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. An art student in Paris, she won the nine-hole golf tournament by shooting a 47.
- 1901 Field Hockey is introduced to women in the United State by Constance M. K. Applebee, a British physical education teacher. She presents a hockey exhibition at Harvard University.
- 1902 The students at the University of Wisconsin organize a Women's Athletic Association.
- 1903 Mary C. Fish hired to teach physical education at the University of Kansas.
- 1904 The Midwest Conference of Deans of Women registers its disapproval of women's intercollegiate athletic competition in the United States.
- 1905 The students at the University of Michigan organize a Women's Athletic Association.
- 1905 Senda Berenson is appointed chairperson of the basketball rules committee of the AAAP. The committee is the forerunner of the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport (NAGWS).
- 1910 The students at the University of Missouri organize a Women's Athletic Association.
- 1910 Dr. Clelia Duel Mosher debunks several popular myths of female health, including one claiming women breathe differently than men, which makes them unfit for strenuous exercise.

- 1911 Dr. Margaret Johnson hired as the Dean of the Women's Department of Physical Education at the University of Kansas.
- 1911 The students at the University of Iowa organize a Women's Athletic Association.
- 1912 The students at the University of Kansas organize the Women's Athletic Association. Basketball, swimming and tennis are the proposed sports.
- 1912 The women at the University of Kansas begin playing field hockey, a first in the mid-west.
- 1914 The American Olympic Committee formally opposes women's athletic competition in the Olympics. The only exception is the floor exercise, where women are allowed to only wear long skirts.
- 1914 Women's basketball rules change to allow half-court play, expanded from the original one-third court rules. Full court play for women doesn't come in until the 1970's.
- 1915 Miss Hazel Pratt is first hired at the University of Kansas. Appointed Coach of Women's Athletics in 1918. Instrumental in the development of intramurals.
- 1916 Kay Curtis institutes synchronized swimming as an integral part of the University of Wisconsin's physical education program.
- 1916 Women start playing organized ice hockey at the University of Minnesota. (Men began in 1914.)
- 1917 Dr. Florence Sherbon is hired as the Head of Women's Physical Education at the University of Kansas.
- 1917 The American Physical Education Association forms a Committee on Women's Athletics to draft standardized, separate rules for women's collegiate field hockey, swimming, track and field, and soccer.
- 1919 The *Daily Kansan* reported that the gymnasium was given over to African American students for the "colored women's basketball game" for the first time in the history of the University, the proceeds of which went to promoting "the growth of colored women's athletics."
- 1919 Dr. James Naismith returns from World War I to the University of Kansas after serving as the head of the international YMCA in France for eighteen months to resume his position as the Head of the Department of Physical Education
- 1920 At the Central Sectional Conference of American College Women it was determined that "women may not take part in intercollegiate athletics."

1920s The Lake Placid Club (NY) organizes skiing events for college women.

1923 “Women are not quite ready for competitive athletics,” asserted Miss Margaret Barto Instructor of Physical Education at the University of Kansas.

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